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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000465

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: LIBERAL PARTY SEEKS CONSENSUS WHILE A FRUSTRATED  
MILITARY THREATENS ACTION

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 462

[1](#)B. STATE 61160

[1](#)C. IIR 6841014209

TEGUCIGALP 00000465 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reason 1.4 (B & D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Ambassador and DCM met with Former President and Liberal Party stalwart Carlos Flores and Liberal Party presidential candidate Elvin Santos to discuss the current political crisis over President Manuel &Mel8 Zelaya's push for a poll to seek support for a referendum to have a constituent assembly. The two said that they were in consultation with military leaders to seek a way forward on the poll so that the military, which has been told by Zelaya to support the poll and by a court that it would be illegal to do so, would not be caught between different political factions. Flores and Santos agreed to consider a meeting hosted by the Ambassador that would include them, Zelaya, and Flores. Flores later called to confirm willingness for such a meeting, now tentatively scheduled for June 16. Flores also reported that he and Santos had met with military leaders and reached a tentative agreement on how to resolve the military's concerns with the poll. Military leaders have been pushing political leaders to reach a compromise on the poll issue, telling many of them that the military would step in to guarantee the constitution and November's election if a compromise is not met. The Embassy believes that the military does not/not intend to carry out this threat. Nevertheless, we have told senior military leaders that any such action would be totally rejected by the U.S. and would be a serious step backwards for Honduras. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador, accompanied by DCM, met June 13 with Former President and Liberal Party stalwart Carlos Flores and Liberal Party presidential candidate Elvin Santos to discuss possible talks between Liberal Party leaders to seek a consensus to avoid a constitutional crisis over President Manuel &Mel8 Zelaya's push for a poll to seek support for a

referendum to have a constituent assembly (the referendum is commonly referred to as the &Fourth Urn8). The Ambassador explained that President Manuel &Mel8 Zelaya had requested that he host a meeting between Zelaya, Santos and Flores, and Congress President and Liberal Party leader Roberto Micheletti to forge a Liberal Party consensus on the referendum issue. The Ambassador added that he had received instructions from Washington to do so (ref B) and sought Santos and Flores, views on whether such a meeting was possible. Santos appeared immediately supportive of such an idea (later telling the Ambassador privately that a continued split in his party would doom his campaign), while Flores welcomed U.S. willingness to encourage dialogue, although he did not commit at that moment to participate. However, Flores telephoned the Ambassador later that night to agree to the meeting. (The meeting is currently set for June 16.)

¶3. (C) Flores, Santos and a large number of other senior politicians have told us that senior military officials have told them directly that the country's leaders must come to an agreement on the poll and referendum or face action by the military, along the lines reported in ref C. The military's high command is extremely uncomfortable with its current position, being told by Zelaya on one hand that they must logistically support the poll while, on the other hand, facing a court order against any government support of the poll. Senior military officials have told us that they have no intention of carrying out their threat. (Nevertheless, we have told them directly that the U.S. would completely oppose and condemn any move against the constitutional order. We will continue to do so at the highest levels.) Flores and Santos told us June 13 that they were planning to meet with military leaders to discuss a legal solution to the crisis so that the military was not left stuck between orders from its commander-in-chief and from a court. Flores later reported

TEGUCIGALP 00000465 002.2 OF 002

to the Ambassador by phone that the outlines of a deal had been met, but did not share the details.

¶4. (C) Comment: We do not believe the military intends to carry out its threat. Nevertheless, we will continue to press upon them the condemnation they would receive from the USG and international community if they did so. The mere fact that they have made such a threat is a step back for Honduran democracy, a sign of its fragility and a reflection of the severity of the political crisis. Almost all of the responsibility for the crisis lies at the feet of Zelaya, who has increasingly pushed the limits of the rule of law (ref A). Nevertheless, our goal is to move through the current crisis over the poll, and see if we can encourage all sides to come together and hopefully agree on a legal and constitutional way out of the crisis. We will also continue to actively support preparations for the November 29 general elections, particularly for the selection of a replacement to Zelaya.

LLORENS